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CARMINA VOTIVA

Carmina Votiva

and other

Occasional Verses

BY

AUSTIN DOBSON

"Enter a Song, singing."—OLD PLAY

LONDON

PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION

1901

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TO
ANDREW LANG
MASTER OF MANY THINGS (THE LIGHTER
LYRE INCLUDED)
THIS COLLECTION IS INSCRIBED
BY HIS OLD FRIEND
THE AUTHOR

July, 1901.

Too hard it is to sing
In these untuneful times,
When only coin can ring
And no one cares for rhymes!

Alas! for him who climbs
To AGANIPPE's spring:—
Too hard it is to sing
In these untuneful times.

His kindred clip his wing;
His feet the critic limes;
If FAME her laurel bring
OLD AGE his forehead rimes:—
Too hard it is to sing
In these untuneful times!

PREFACE.

THE sixty pieces here collected belong to many periods in the author's life. But they are alike in this, that none of them are now to be found in any of his published volumes. Some of them are reprinted from ephemeral sources, others have never appeared before, one or two have been restored from the earliest issues of his poems.

Of this collection only 125 copies have been printed for England and America, and the type has been broken up.

No. 97.

Antenobium

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A BALLAD OF THE QUEEN'S MAJESTY.

(JUNE 22, 1897.)

NAME that has been thy nation's shield
On many an alien shore and sea ;
Name that in many a fateful field
Has taught the stubborn foe to flee ;
Promise and proof of virtues three,
Valour unvaunting, vigour, verve,
We hail thy white-winged Sovereignty,
VICTORIA !—WHOM GOD PRESERVE !

Monarchs there are to whom men yield
Obeisance—in a bondman's key ;
Monarchs whose sceptred might doth wield
Only the rod of Tyranny ;
We, in free homage, being free,—

We joy that naught can shake or curve
Thy rectitude of Royalty,
VICTORIA!—WHOM GOD PRESERVE!

Therefore from all our towers be pealed
The note of greeting; therefore be,
As from a thousand springs unsealed,
Outpoured the tide of mirth and glee;
For surely not to-day shall we
From sixty years' allegiance swerve,
Or shame thy twice-told Jubilee,
VICTORIA!—WHOM GOD PRESERVE!

QUEEN! to whom true men bend the knee,
Our island heart and brain and nerve
Are loyal—loyal unto thee,
VICTORIA!—WHOM GOD PRESERVE!

A MADRIGAL

WRITTEN FOR "CHORAL SONGS IN HONOUR
OF QUEEN VICTORIA," 1899.

WHO can dwell with greatness! Greatness is too
high;

Flowers are for the meadow, suns are for the sky;—
Ah! but there is greatness in this land of ours,
High as is the sunlight, humble as the flowers!

Queen, of thee the fable! Lady, thine the fate!
Royal, and yet lowly, lowly and yet great;—
Great in far dominion, great in bannered years,
Greater still as woman, greatest in thy tears!

FOR A FLORAL WREATH.

(JANUARY 22, 1901.)

GREAT Queen, great Lady, Mother most of all!

Beyond the turmoil of Earth's hopes and fears,

How should you need the tribute of our tears?—

Our helpless, useless tears! But they must fall.

RANK AND FILE.

(SOUTH AFRICA, 1900-1.)

O UNDISTINGUISHED Dead!

Whom the bent covers, or the rock-strewn steep
Shows to the stars, for you I mourn,—I weep,

O undistinguished Dead!

None knows your name.

Blacken'd and blurr'd in the wild battle's brunt,
Hotly you fell . . . with all your wounds in front:

This is your fame!

VERSES READ AT THE DINNER OF
THE OMAR KHAYYÁM CLUB
ON THURSDAY, 25 MARCH, 1897.

“——*Medio de fonte leporum*
Surgit Omari aliquid.”

LUCRETIVS (adapted).

*“While we the Feast by Fruit and Wine prolong
A Bard bobs up, and bores us with a Song.”*

THE APICIAD.

’Twas Swift who said that people “view
In HOMER more than HOMER knew.”
I can’t pretend to claim the gift
Of playing BENTLEY upon SWIFT;
But I suspect the reading true
Is “OMAR more than OMAR knew,”—
Or why this large assembly met
Lest we this OMAR should forget?
(In a parenthesis, I note
Our RUSTUM¹ here, without red coat;

¹ Field-Marshal Viscount Wolseley.

Where SOHRAB sits I'm not aware,
But that's FIRDAUSI in the Chair!)—
I say then that we now are met
Lest we this OMAR should forget,
Who, ages back, remote, obscure,
Wrote verses once at Naishápúr,—
Verses which, as I understand,
Were merely copied out by hand,
And now, without etched plates, or aid
Of India paper, or handmade,
Bid fair Parnassus' top to climb,
And knock the Classics out of time.

Persicos odi—Horace said,
And therefore is no longer read.
Time, who could simply not endure
Slight to the Bard of Naishápúr
(Time, by the way, was rather late
For one so often up-to-date!),
Went swiftly to the Roll of Fame
And blotted Q. H. F. his name;
Since when, for every youth or Miss
That knows *Quis multa gracilis*,
There are a hundred who can tell

What OMAR thought of Heav'n and Hell;
Who BAHRÁM was; and where (at need)
Lies hid the Beaker of JAMSHYD;—
In short, without a break can quote
Most of what OMAR ever wrote.

Well, OMAR KHAYYÁM wrote of Wine,
And all of us, sometimes, must dine;
And OMAR KHAYYÁM wrote of Roses,
And all of us, no doubt, have noses;
And OMAR KHAYYÁM wrote of Love,
Which some of us are not above.
Also, he charms to this extent,
We don't know, always, what he meant.
Lastly, the man's so plainly dead
We can heap honours on his head.

Then, too, he scores in other wise
By his "deplorable demise."
There is so much that we could say
Were he a Bard of yesterday!
We should discuss his draughts and pills,
His baker's and his vintner's bills;
Rake up—perhaps 'tis well we can't—
Gossip about his maiden aunt;

And all that marketable matter
Which FREEMAN nicknamed "Harriet-chatter!"
But here not even Persian candles
Can light us to the smallest scandals;—
Thus far your OMAR gains at least
By having been so long deceased.

Failing of this, we needs must fall
Back on his *opus* after all;—
Those quatrains so compact, complete,
So suited to FITZGERALD's feet,
(And, let us add, so subtly planned
To tempt the imitative band!)—
Those censers of *Omar* ware
That breathe into the perfumed air
His doubt, his unrest, his despair;—
Those jewels-four-lines-long that show,
Eight hundred years and more ago,
An old thing underneath the sun
In Babylonish Babylon:—
A Body and a Soul at strife
To solve the Mystery of Life!

So then all hail to OMAR K!
(To take our more familiar way)

Though much of what he wrote and did
In darkest mystery is hid;
And though (unlike our bards) his task
Was less to answer than to ask;
For all his endless Why and Whether,
He brings us here to-night together;
And therefore (as I said before),
Hail! OMAR KHAYYÁM, hail! once more!

FOR A COPY OF
"THE COMPLEAT ANGLER."

"Le rêve de la vie champêtre a été de tout temps l'idéal des villes."

GEORGE SAND.

I CARE not much how folk prefer
To dress your *Chub* or *Chavender*;—
I care no whit for line or hook,
But still I love old IZAAK's book,
Wherein a man may read at ease
Of "gander-grass" and "culver-keys,"
Or with half-pitying wonder, note
What *Topsell*, what *Du Bartas* wrote,
Or list the song, by *Maudlin* sung,
That *Marlowe* made when he was young:—
These things, in truth, delight me more
Than all old IZAAK's angling lore.

These were his Secret. What care I
How men concoct the Hawthorn-fly,

Who could as soon make Syllabub
As catch your *Chavender* or *Chub*;
And might not, in ten years, arrive
At baiting hooks with frogs, alive!—
But still I love old IZAAK's page,
Old IZAAK's simple *Golden Age*,
Where blackbirds flute from ev'ry bough,
Where lasses "milk the sand-red cow,"
Where lads are "sturdy foot-ball swains,"
And naught but soft "May-butter" rains;
Where you may breathe untainted air
Either at *Hodsden* or at *Ware*;
And sing, or slumber, or look wise
Till *Phæbus* sink adown the skies;
Then, laying rod and tackle by,
Choose out some "cleanly Alehouse" nigh,
With ballads "stuck about the wall,"
Of *Joan of France* or *English Mall*—
With sheets that smell of lavender—
There eat your *Chub* (or *Chavender*),
And keep old IZAAK's honest laws
For "mirth that no repenting draws"—
To wit, a friendly stave or so,
That goes to *Heigh-trolollie-loe*,

Or more to make the ale-can pass,
A hunting song of *William Basse*—
Then talk of fish and fishy diet,
And dream you “Study to be quiet.”

1899.

IN "AN APPENDIX TO THE ROWFANT
LIBRARY."

F. L. L. In Memoriam.

"His Books." Oh yes, his Books I know—
Each worth a monarch's ransom ;
But now, beside their row on row,
I see, erect and handsome,

The courtly Owner, glass in eye,
With half-sad smile, forerunning
Some triumph of an apt reply,—
Some master-stroke of punning.

Where shall we meet his like again ?
Where hear, in such perfection,
Such genial talk of gods and men,—
Such store of recollection ;

Or where discern a verse so neat,
So well-bred and so witty,—
So finished in its least conceit,
So mixed of mirth and pity?

Pope taught him rhythm, Prior ease,
Praed buoyancy and banter;
What modern bard would learn from these?
Ah, *tempora mutantur*!

The old *régime* departs,—departs;
Our days of mime and mocker,
For all their imitative arts,
Produce no FREDERICK LOCKER.

1900.

“GOOD LUCK TO YOUR FISHING!”

FOR A PICTURE BY MR. G. F. WATTS, R.A.

GOOD luck to your fishing !
And what have you caught ?
Ah, would that my wishing
Were more than a thought !
Ah, would you had caught her,
Young Chloe, for me,—
Young Chloe, the daughter
Of Proteus, the sea !

She irks me, she irks me,
With blue of her eyes ;
She irks me, she irks me,
With little drawn sighs ;
She lures me with laughter,
She tempts me with tears ;
And hope follows after,—
Hope only,—and fears !

Good luck to your fishing!
But would you had caught
That maid beyond wishing,—
That maid beyond thought!
O cast the line deeper,
Deep—deep in the sea;
And catch her, and keep her,
Dan Cupid, for me!

Christmas, 1900.

“WHEN THIS OLD WORLD WAS NEW.”

WHEN this old world was new,
Before the towns were made,
Love was a shepherd too.

Clear-eyed as flowers men grew,
Of evil unafraid,
When this old world was new.

No skill had they to woo,
Who but their hearts obey'd—
Love was a shepherd too.

What need to sigh or sue !
Not so was life delay'd
When this old world was new.

Under the candid blue
They kiss'd their shepherd maid—
Love was a shepherd too.

They knew but joy ; they knew
No whit of state or grade :
When this old world was new,
Love was a shepherd too.

FOR A COPY OF
"THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD."

By GOLDSMITH's tomb, the City's cry
Grows faint and distant ; now no more,
From that famed Street he trod of yore,
Men turn where those old Templars lie !

Only some dreamer such as I
Pauses awhile from dust and roar
By GOLDSMITH's tomb !

And then—ah ! then, when none is nigh,
What shadowy shapes unseen before
Troop back again from Lethe's shore !—
How the ghosts gather then, and sigh,
By GOLDSMITH's tomb !

1883.

AFTER A HOLIDAY.

THREE little ducks by a door,
 Snuggling aside in the sun ;
The sweep of a threshing-floor,
 A flail with its One-two, One ;

A shaggy-haired, loose-limbed mare,
 Grave as a master at class ;
A foal with its heels in the air,
 Rolling, for joy, in the grass ;

A sunny-eyed, golden-haired lad,
 Laughing, astride on a wall ;
A collie-dog, lazily glad . . .
 Why do I think of it all ?

Why ? From my window I see,
 Once more through the dust-dry pane,
The sky like a great Dead Sea,
 And the lash of the London rain ;

And I read—here in London town,
Of a murder done at my gate,
And a goodly ship gone down,
And of homes made desolate ;

And I know, with the old sick heart,
That but for a moment's space,
We may shut our sense, and part
From the pain of this tarrying place

FOR A CHARITY ANNUAL.

IN Angel-Court the sunless air
Grows faint and sick ; to left and right
The cowering houses shrink from sight,
Huddling and hopeless, eyeless, bare.

Misnamed, you say ? For surely rare
Must be the angel-shapes that light
In Angel-Court !

Nay !—the Eternities are there.
Death at the doorway stands to smite ;
Life in its garrets leaps to light ;
And Love has climbed that crumbling stair
In Angel-Court.

1901.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE PORCH.

By a Summer-day Stoic.

TO A. J. MUNBY.

“Cultivons notre jardin.”—VOLTAIRE.

ACROSS my Neighbour's waste of whins
For roods the rabbit burrows ;
You scarce can see where first begins
His range of steaming furrows ;
I am not sad that he is great,
He does not ask my pardon ;
Beside his wall I cultivate
My modest patch of garden.

I envy not my Neighbour's trees ;—
To me it nowise matters
Whether in east or western breeze
His “dry-tongued laurel patters.”
Me too the bays become ; but still,
I sleep without narcotics,

Though he should bind his brows at will
With odorous exotics.

Let goodman Greenfat, glad to dine,
With true *bon-vivant's* benison,
Extol my Neighbour's wit and wine,—
His virtue and his venison :
I care not. Still for me the gorse
Will blaze about the thicket ;
The Common's purblind pauper horse
Will peer across my wicket ;

For me the geese will thread the furze,
In hissing file, to follow
The tinker's sputtering wheel that whirs
Across the breezy hollow ;
And look, where smoke of gipsy huts
Curls blue against the bushes,
That little copse is famed for nuts,
For nightingales and thrushes !

But hark ! I hear my Neighbour's drums !
Some dreary deputation
Of Malice or of Wonder, comes
In guise of adulation.

Poor Neighbour ! Though you like the tune,
One little pinch of care is
Enough to clog a whole balloon
Of *aura popularis* ;

Not amulets, nor epiderm
As tough as armadillo's,
Can shield you if Suspicion worm
Betwixt your easy pillows ;
And, though on ortolans you sup,
Beside you shadowy sitters
Can pour in your ungenial cup
Unstimulating bitters.

Let Envy crave and Avarice save,
Let Folly ride her circuit ;
I hold that—on this side the grave—
To find one's vein and work it,
To keep one's wants both fit and few,
To cringe to no condition,
To count a candid friend or two,—
May bound a man's ambition.

Swell, South-wind, swell my Neighbour's sails ;
Fill Fortune, fill his coffers ;

If Fate has made his *rôle* the whale's,
And me the minnow's offers ;
I am not sad that he is great,
He need not ask my pardon ;
Beside his wall I cultivate
My modest patch of garden.

1871.

THE HOLOCAUST.

“Heart-free, with the least little touch of spleen.”

Maud.

ABOVE my mantelshelf there stands
A little bronze sarcophagus,
Carved by the unknown artist's hands
With this one word—*Amoribus*!

Along the lid a Love lies dead:
Across his breast his broken bow;
Elsewhere they dig his tiny bed,
And round it women wailing go:—

A trick, a toy—mere “Paris ware,”
Some Quartier-Latin sculptor's whim,
Wrought in a fit of mock despair,
With sight, it may be, something dim,

Because the love of yesterday
Had left the *grenier*, light MUSETTE,

And she who made the morrow gay,
LUTINE or MIMI, was not yet,—

A toy. But ah! what hopes deferred
(O friend, with sympathetic eye!),
What vows (now decently interred)
Within that “narrow compass” lie!

For there, last night, not sadly, too,
With one live ember I cremated
A nest of cooing *billets-doux*,
That just two decades back were dated.

1889.

THE STREET SINGER.

HE stands at the curb and sings,
'Tis a doleful tune and slow . . .
Ah me ! if I had but wings !

He bends to the coin one flings,
But he never attempts to go,—
He stands at the curb, and sings.

The conjurer comes with his rings.
And the Punch-and-Judy show.
(Ah me ! if I had but wings !)

They pass like all fugitive things,—
They fade and they pass, but lo !
He stands at the curb and sings.

All the magic that music brings
Is lost when he murders it so . .
Ah me ! if I had but wings !

But the worst is a thought that stings,
There is nothing at hand to throw,—
He stands at the curb and sings . . .
Ah me! if I had but wings!

1883.

THE BALLAD OF THE BORE.

FOR "ALMA MATER'S MIRROR," 1887.

"Garrulus hunc quando consumet cunque."

HOR. *Sat.* ix., lib. i.

I SEE him come from far,
And, sick with hopelessness,
Invoke some kindly star,—
I see him come, not less.
Is there no sure recess
Where hunted men may lie?
Ye Gods, it is too hard!
I feel his glittering eye,—
Defend us from The Bard!

He knows nor let nor bar:
With ever-nearing stress,
Like Juggernaut his car,
I see him onward press;
He waves a huge MS.;

He puts evasion by,
He stands—as one on guard,
And reads—how volubly!—
Defend us from The Bard.

He reads—of Fates that mar,
Of Woes beyond redress,
Of all the Moons that are,
Of Maids that never bless
(As one, indeed, might guess) ;
Of Vows, of Hopes too high,
Of Dolours by the yard
That none believe (nor buy),—
Defend us from The Bard !

ENVOY.

PRINCE PHŒBUS, all must die,
Or well- or evil-starred,
Or whole of heart or scarred ;
But why in this way—why ?
Defend us from The Bard.

1887.

JULY.

GOOD-BYE to the Town!—good-bye!
Hurrah! for the sea and the sky!

In the street the flower-girls cry;
In the street the water-carts ply;
And a flutter, with features awry,
Plays fitfully “Scots wha hae”—
And the throat of that flutter is dry;
Good-bye to the Town!—good-bye!

And over the roof-tops nigh
Comes a waft like a dream of the May;
And a lady-bird lit on my tie;
And a cock-chaffer came with the tray;
And a butterfly (no one knows why)
Mistook my Aunt’s cap for a spray;
And “next door” and “over the way”

The neighbours take wing and fly:
Hurrah! for the sea and the sky!

To Buxton, the waters to try,—
To Buxton goes old Mrs. Bligh;
And the Captain to Homburg and play
Will carry his cane and his eye;
And even Miss Morgan Lefay
Is flitting—to far Peckham Rye;
And my Grocer has gone—in a “Shay”;
And my Tailor has gone—in a “Fly”;—
Good-bye to the Town!—good-bye!

And it's O for the sea and the sky!
And it's O for the boat and the bay!
For the white foam whirling by,
And the sharp, salt edge of the spray!
For the wharf where the black nets fry,
And the wrack and the oarweed sway!
For the stroll when the moon is high
To the nook by the Flag-house gray!
For the *risus ab angulo* shy
From the Someone we designate “Di”!
For the moment of silence,—the sigh!

“How I *dote* on a moon!” “So do I!”
For the token we snatch on the sly
(With nobody there to say Fie!)
Hurrah! for the sea and the sky!

So Phillis, the fawn-footed, hie
For a hansom! Ere close of the day
Between us a “world” must lie,—
Good-bye to the Town!—GOOD-BYE!
Hurrah! for the sea and the sky!

1876.

NOTES OF A HONEYMOON.

IN THE TRAIN.

AT last we are free,—

All hail, Hymenæus !

From C., and from D.,—

At last!—we are free !

What a comfort 'twill be

“Mrs. Grundy” can't see us !

At last we are free,—

All hail, Hymenæus !

FROM THE HOTEL WINDOW.

“WHAT a mountain !” “What ferns !”

“And a pond, too, for Rover !”

Da capo—in turns

“What a mountain !” “What ferns !”

Meanwhile the toast burns,
And the kettle boils over;—
“What a mountain!” “What ferns!”
“And a pond, too, for Rover.”

THE FIRST WALK.

“JOIN hands for a peep.
You must keep yourself steady.
See the cliff goes down steep,—
Join hands for a peep.
This they call ‘Lovers’ Leap,’—
We have leaped it already!
Join hands for a peep.
You must keep yourself steady.”

ARCADIA.

“I CAN hear a sheep-bell.”
“There are doves cooing yonder.”
“It sounds like a spell,—
I can hear a sheep-bell.”

“Shall we like this as well—
In a twelvemonth?” “*I wonder.*”
“I can hear a sheep-bell.”
“There are doves cooing yonder.”

AT A BOOKSTALL.

“HERE it is in *The Times*,—
Dear Charlie,—how funny!
'Twixt a 'Smith' and a 'Symes,'—
Here it is!—in *The Times*.”
“And it's *not* with the 'crimes'!”
“You must pay. *I've* no money!
Here it is in *The Times*,—
Dear Charlie,—how funny!”

MISGIVINGS (No. 1).

“POOR Papa,—he's alone!”
She is sure he must miss her.
There's a tear in the tone,—
“*Poor* Papa! He's alone!”

At this point I own,
There is naught but to kiss her.
“ Poor Papa,—he ’s alone ! ”
She is sure he must miss her.

MISGIVINGS (No. 2).

BY-PLAY as before.
“ Then you’ll love me for ever ? ”
“ For ever—and more ! ”
(By-play as before.)
“ Never think me a bore ?—
Never laugh at me ? ” “ NEVER ! ”
By-play as before.
“ Then you’ll love me for ever ? ”

THE SUM TOTAL.

SHE is all that is sweet !
I must learn to deserve her.
Bright, kind . . . I repeat—
She is all that is sweet !

(Here a noise in the street
Puts an end to my fervour.)
She is all that is sweet !
I must learn to deserve her.

1878.

“CHANGE.”

FREEZE, freeze, O icy wind !
Lucilla's cap's awry ;
No signal undesigned
To those that read the sky.

Dull drags the breakfast by :
She's something on her mind ;—
Freeze, freeze, O icy wind !
Lucilla's cap's awry !

“ You're tired—” “ And you're unkind ! ”
“ You're cross—” “ That I deny ! ”
“ Perhaps you're both combined.”
“ I'm tired of you—Good-bye ! ”—
Freeze, freeze, O icy wind !
Lucilla's cap's awry !

1877.

“FAIR.”

“BLOW, blow, Etesian gale !
Lucilla’s cap is straight ;
Fill fast the flowing sail
Of happy man and mate.

“What is it, Dear ?—A plate ?
Do taste this potted quail.”
Blow, blow, Etesian gale !
Lucilla’s cap is straight.

“More sugar ?—No. You’re pale.
My Own, you work too late !
Ah me, if *you* should fail !
I’ll see you to the gate.”—
Blow, blow, Etesian gale !
Lucilla’s cap is straight.

1877.

THE SONG OF THE SEA WIND.

How it sings, sings, sings,
Blowing sharply from the sea-line,
With an edge of salt that stings ;
How it laughs aloud, and passes,
As it cuts the close cliff-grasses ;
How it sings again, and whistles
As it shakes the stout sea-thistles—
How it sings !

How it shrieks, shrieks, shrieks
In the crannies of the headland,
In the gashes of the creeks ;
How it shrieks once more, and catches
Up the yellow foam in patches ;
How it whirls it out and over
To the corn-field and the clover—
How it shrieks !

How it roars, roars, roars
In the iron under-caverns,
In the hollows of the shores ;
How it roars anew, and thunders,
As the strong hull splits and sunders :
And the spent ship, tempest-driven,
On the reef lies rent and riven—
How it roars !

How it wails, wails, wails
In the tangle of the wreckage,
In the flapping of the sails,
How it sobs away, subsiding,
Like a tired child after chiding ;
And across the ground-swell rolling,
You can hear the bell-buoy tolling—
How it wails !

1885.

TO A LADY.
WITH A VOLUME OF HERBERT.

I.
WHEN I go
From my place
At your feet,
Sweet,
All I know
Of your face
I recall,—
All,
Being by
(In the net)
I forget.
Why?

II.

Being by,
I but hear
What you say,—
Yea,
Naught am I
But an ear
To the word
Heard;
Then I go
And the grace
Of your face
Know.

1868.

TO LORD DE TABLEY.

IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF A VOLUME OF POEMS.

STILL may the Muses foster thee, O Friend,
Who, while the vacant quidnuncs stand at gaze,
Wond'ring what Prophet next the Fates may send,
Still tread'st the ancient ways;

Still climb'st the clear-cold altitudes of Song,
Or ling'ring "by the shore of old Romance,"
Heed'st not the vogue, how little or how long,
Of marvels made in France.

Still to the summits may thy face be set,
And long may we, that heard thy morning rhyme,
Hang on thy noon-day music, nor forget
In the hushed even-time!

1894.

A "DEPARTMENTAL DITTY."

TO THE HON. T. H. W. PELHAM.

WHILE you, at Brynhyffyn,^s
Are taking your muffin,
And shrimps and plum-duff in
The sight of the sea,
Remember, remember,
The Ides of September,
And this junior member,
Who wishes to flee!

You, bold as a Viking,
And clad to your liking,
Go bathing or "biking,"
Wherever you please;
He, worried and fretting,
Tight-collared and sweating,
Is well-nigh forgetting
The colour of trees!

No President wrings you,
No work the post brings you,
The salt water stings you
 Wherever you go ;
Lost,—lost in the Present,
And free as a pheasant,
Your “ Minutes ” are pleasant,
 But his are not so !

For “ F. and H.”¹ grinds him,
And blue paper blinds him,
And red tape enwinds him
 From shoulder to knee ;
While you, at Brynhyffyn
Grow sleek as a puffin,
With every new snuff in
 You take of the sea !

1899.

¹ Fisheries and Harbour Department.

TO THE EARL OF CREWE
ON HIS MARRIAGE.

WITH A VOLUME OF VERSE.

IN the duo of Love
 There is little libretto ;
There are few rhymes but “dove”
IN the duo of Love ;
Yet we prize it above
 All your Epic falsetto ;—
IN the duo of Love
 There is little libretto.

1899.

TO THE LADY DOROTHY NEVILL.

WITH A MEMOIR OF HORACE WALPOLE.

HERE is HORACE his Life. I have ventured to draw
him

As the BERRYS, the CONWAYS, the MONTAGUS
saw him :

Very kind to his friends, to the rest only so-so ;
A Talker, Fine Gentleman, Wit, Virtuoso ;
With—running through all his sham-Gothic gim-
crackery—

A dash of SÉVIGNÉ, SAINT-SIMON and THACKERAY.
For errors of ignorance, haste, execution,
From you, his descendant, I ask absolution.

1891.

TO EDMUND GOSSE.

WITH A FIRST EDITION OF "ATALANTA
IN CALYDON."

AT your pleasure here I hold
"Atalanta, snowy-souled":
Rather smudgy though,—the gold
Not so brilliant as of old;
FIRST EDITION,—this is plain;
Monogram of J. B. PAYNE . . .
Dogg'rel this, but it was reckoned
Metre under GEORGE THE SECOND.
Then a man was thought a Bard
If by striving *very* hard
He could write—say once a quarter—
Something just as long, or shorter.
Straight they crowned his head with bay,
Nobles took him home to "tay";
Maids of honour for his muse
Quite forgot their "P's" and "Q's."

See his name on all the posts ;
People rush to buy in hosts
TONSON's last impression with
Author's portrait, done by SMITH ;
All his little words are quoted ;
All his little airs are noted ;
And, if he goes trickling on
From his paltry Helicon,
He is made Court-Footman or,
Possibly, Ambassador !

1878.

TO THE SAME.

WITH CHURCHILL'S "POEMS" (1763).

WHEN CHURCHILL wrote, th' Aonian maid
He served was scarce of speech afraid ;
 She used no phrase to circumvent
 The homely article she meant,
But plainly called a spade a spade.

Nor was the public much dismayed.
He but his age's law obeyed ;—
 They liked to see the bludgeon's dent
 When CHURCHILL wrote.

'Tis not so now. To-day the trade
Demands the finest Sheffield blade ;
 We use a subtler instrument ;
 We cut for depth and not extent . . .
But would 'twere ours—the Mark they made—
 When CHURCHILL wrote.

1877.

TO THE SAME.

WITH A MEMOIR OF HORACE WALPOLE.

HAD I but WALPOLE's wit, I'd write
A quatrain here to-day
Should turn the wig of PRIOR white,
And make e'en HORACE gray ;

Or had I STANHOPE's pen (the same
That once he gave to YOUNG),
I would as neat a couplet frame
As e'er was said or sung ;

But since I've not, I can't, you know ;
The page must go without it ;
This is my latest gift ; and so . . .
And so, that's all about it !

1891.

TO THE SAME.

WITH "AT THE SIGN OF THE LYRE."

"Book against book." "Agreed," I said :
But 'twas the truck of Diomed !

—And yet, in Fairy-land, I'm told
Dead leaves—as these—will turn to gold.
Take them, Sir Alchemist, and see !
Nothing transmutes like sympathy.

1885.

TO THE SAME. `

WITH VINCENT BOURNE'S "POETICAL WORKS."

Gossip, may we live as now,
Brothers ever, I and thou ;
Us may never Envy's mesh hold,
Anger never cross our threshold ;
Let our little Lares be
Friendship and Urbanity.

1876.

TO THE SAME.

WITH GOLDSMITH'S "SELECTED POEMS."

GRUB-STREET is Milton-Street to-day ;
And that *antiqua Mater*
Whom GOLDSMITH served has passed away ;
But is our lot the greater ?

Ah no ! as some lean rascal hides
His misery from his betters,
We wrap our trash in parchment sides,
And call our task-work "Letters."

1887.

TO THE SAME.

WITH A COPY OF WALTON'S LIVES.

You write your Life of DONNE. 'Twill be
A masterpiece of sympathy !
Exact, I know, in fact and date,
And skilled to lead, to stimulate,
To show, as you would have him seen,
That morbid, mystic, mighty Dean.

But will you catch old IZAAK's phrase
That glows with energy of praise ?
Old IZAAK's ambling unpretence
That flames with untaught eloquence ?
Will you ? I pause for a reply,
And you must answer, Friend, not I.

1899.

TO THE SAME.

WITH THE AUTHOR'S WORKS.

Exegi monumentum.

EIGHT volumes!—all well-polished prose,
Or better verse (as some suppose);
In style more playful than severe,
Moral in tone (*pour qui sait lire*);
All written by my single pen,
And praised by some distinguished men,
But else not widely read, I fear :—

Crown me, MELPOMENE, my Dear !

1900.

TO EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN.

DEDICATION OF "AT THE SIGN OF THE LYRE."

No need to-day that we commend
This pinnacle to your care, O Friend!
You steered the bark that went before
Between the whirlpool and the shore;
So,—though we want no pilot now,—
We write your name upon the prow.

1885.

TO FREDERICK LOCKER.

DEDICATION OF "PROVERBS IN PORCELAIN."

Is it to kindest Friend I send
This nosegay gathered new ?
Or is it more to Critic sure,—
To Singer clear and true ?
I know not which, indeed, nor need ;
All three I found—in You.

1877.

FOR LOCKER'S "LONDON LYRICS."

APOLLO made, one April day,
A new thing in the rhyming way ;
Its turn was neat, its wit was clear,
It wavered 'twixt a smile and tear,
Then Momus gave a touch satiric,
And it became a "London Lyric."

1881.

TO BRANDER MATTHEWS.

WITH A VOLUME OF VERSES.

IN vain to-day I scrape and blot :
The nimble words, the phrases neat,
Decline to mingle or to meet ;
My skill is all foregone,—forgot.

He will not canter, walk or trot,
My Pegasus. I spur, I beat,
In vain to-day !

And yet 'twere sure the saddest lot
That I should fail to leave complete
One poor . . . the rhyme suggests “ conceit ” !
Alas ! 'Tis all too clear I'm not
In *vein* to-day.

1884.

TO THE LATE H. C. BUNNER.

WITH A VOLUME OF VERSES.

WITNESS my hand (and seal thereto):
All ye who wrong by word or sign,
This unprotected Muse of mine,
I wish you . . . Something else to do!

May all your bills at once fall due!
May She, whose grace you seek, decline!
Witness my hand!

But you, acute, accomplished, true
And *candid*, who in every line
Discern a spark (or sparks) divine,
Be blessed! There's good in store for you,—
Witness my hand!

1884.

TO GEORGE H. BOUGHTON, R.A.

WITH A VOLUME OF VERSES.

SPRING stirs and wakes by holt and hill,
In barren copse and bloomless close
Revives the memory of the rose,
And breaks the yellow daffodil.

Look how the spears of crocus fill
The ancient hollows of the snows,—
Spring stirs and wakes!

Yet what to you are months? At will
For you the season comes or goes;
We watch the flower that fades and blows,
But on your happy canvas still
Spring stirs and wakes!

1885.

TO RICHARD WATSON GILDER.

WITH A VOLUME OF VERSES.

OLD friends are best ! And so to you
Again I send, in closer throng,
No unfamiliar shapes of song,
But those that once you liked and knew.

You surely will not do them wrong ;
For are you not an old friend, too ?—
Old friends are best.

Old books, old wine, old Nankin blue ;—
All things, in short, to which belong
The charm, the grace that Time makes strong,—
All these I prize, but (*entre nous*)
Old friends are best !

1884.

TO LAURENCE HUTTON.

WITH A VOLUME OF VERSES.

THERE is no “mighty purpose” in this book.

Of that I warn you at the opening page,
Lest haply, 'twixt the leaves you careless look,
And, finding nothing to reform the age,
Fall with the rhyme and rhymer in a rage.
Let others prate of problems and of powers;
I bring but fancies born of idle hours,
That striving only after Art and Ease,
Have scarcely more of moral than the flowers,
And little else of mission than to please.

1884.

EPIGRAMS.

ON THE POETRY OF ARTIFICE.

WITHIN this verse, said Dick, you see
There's not a single "B" or "D":
Why not (quoth Ned) go farther yet,
And leave out *all* the alphabet?

1889.

ON DIDACTICS IN POETRY.

PARNASSUS' peaks still catch the sun;
But why—O lyric brother!—
Why build a Pulpit on the one,
A Platform on the other?

1876.

ON A CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ.

I DOUBT your painful pedants who
Can read a Dictionary through;
But he must be a dismal dog
Who can't enjoy this Catalogue.

1893.

VERSES WRITTEN FOR THE MENU OF THE OMAR KHAYYÁM CLUB.

"It does not appear there was any danger in holding and singing Súfi Pantheism, so long as the Poet made his salaam to Mohammed at the beginning and end of the Song."—FITZGERALD'S *Preface to Rubáiyat*, 1872.

SALAAM to OMAR ! We that meet to-night
Have bid Black Care be banished, and invite
The Rose, the Cup, the not-too-ancient Jest,
To help and cheer us, but beyond the rest,
Peaceful Digestion with its blissful calm.
Therefore to OMAR once again—SALAAM !

SALAAM to OMAR ! Life in truth is short
And mortal man of many ills the sport;
Yet still th' Oasis of the Board commends
Its vantage-ground for cheerful talk of friends,
And brings Oblivion, like an Eastern Balm.
Therefore to OMAR once again—SALAAM !

May 17, 1901.

HILL AND VALLEY.

HE.

COME, let us climb to the height,
Peak after peak in the sun,
As the rays brighten, grow rosy and lighten,
Now that the thunder has done.

SHE.

Nay; through the leafage, the light
Gentlier glimmers below;
See through the valley the rivulets sally,
Singing aloud as they go.

HE.

Grandly, ah! grandly the hill
Broke the black storm on its crest;
All the cliff under went leaping the thunder,
Growling away in the west.

SHE.

Here it is restful and still ;
Only the drops from the trees,
Where the shades darkle, fall slowly and sparkle,—
Here there is solace and ease.

HE.

Child, but the eagle above,
Now that the mists are withdrawn,
Never wing-weary, sails up from his eyrie,
E'en to the eye of the dawn.

SHE.

Ah! But below us the dove,
Crooning for joy on the nest,
Fills with soft slumber the leaves without number.
Shadow and quiet are best.

1881.

“ROSE, IN THE HEDGE-ROW GROWN.”

ROSE, in the hedge-row grown,
Where the scent of the fresh sweet hay
Comes up from the fields new-mown,
You know it—you know it—alone,
So I gather you here to-day.

For here—was it not here, say?—
That she came by the woodland way,
And my heart with a hope unknown
Rose?

Ah yes!—with her bright hair blown,
And her eyes like the skies of May,
And her steps like the rose-leaves strown
When the winds in the rose-trees play—
It was here—O my love!—my own
Rose!

1876.

LOVE'S FAREWELL.

“No more!” I said to Love. “No more!

I scorn your baby-arts to know!

Not now am I as once of yore;

My brow the Sage’s line can show!”

“Farewell!” he laughed. “Farewell! I go!”

And clove the air with fluttering track.

“Farewell!” he cried far off;—but lo!

He sent a Parthian arrow back!

1876.

HUITAINS.

FOR "THE LIBRARY" OF MR. ANDREW LANG.

I.

Books, books again, and books once more !
These are our theme, which some miscall
Mere madness, setting little store
By copies either short or tall.
But you, O Slaves of Shelf and Stall !
We rather write for you that hold
Patched folios dear, and prize "the small,
Rare volume, black with tarnish'd gold."¹

II.

"Of making many books," 'twas said,
"There is no end"; and who thereon
The ever-running ink doth shed
But proves the words of Solomon.

¹ FERRIAR'S *Bibliomania*.

Therefore we now, for colophon,
From London's city drear and dark,
In the year Eighteen-Eighty-One,
Reprint them at the press of CLARK.

1881.

A BALLAD OF ANTIQUARIES.

THE days decay as flower of grass,
The years as silent waters flow ;
All things that are depart, alas !
As leaves the winnowing breezes strow ;
And still while yet, full-orbed and slow,
New suns the old horizon climb,
Old Time must reap, as others sow :
We are the gleaners after Time !

We garner all the things that pass,
We harbour all the winds may blow ;
As misers we up-store, amass
All gifts the hurrying Fates bestow ;
Old chronicles of feast and show,
Old waifs of by-gone rune and rhyme,
Old jests that made old banquets glow :—
We are the gleaners after Time !

We hoard old lore of lad and lass,
Old flowers that in old gardens grow,
Old records writ on tomb and brass,
Old spoils of arrow-head and bow,
Old wrecks of old worlds' overthrow,
Old relics of Earth's primal slime,
All drift that wanders to and fro:—
We are the gleaners after Time!

ENVOY.

FRIENDS, that we know not and we know!
We pray you, by this Christmas chime,
Help us to save the things that go:
We are the gleaners after Time.

1880.

A SECOND BALLAD OF ANTIQUARIES.

“ FRIENDS that we know not ” . . late we said.

We know you now, true friends, who still,
Where'er Time's tireless scythe has led,
Have wrought with us through good and ill,—
Have toiled the weary sheaves to fill.
Hail then, O known and tried !—and you,
Who know us not to-day, but will—
Hail to you all, Old Friends and New !

With no scant store our barns are fed:
The full sacks bulge by door and sill,
With grain the threshing-floors are spread,
The piled grist feeds the humming mill;
And—but for you—all this were nil,
A harvest of lean ears and few,
But for your service, friends, and skill ;
Hail to you all, Old Friends and New !

But hark!—Is that the Reaper's tread?
Come, let us glean once more until
Here, where the snowdrop lifts its head,
The days bring round the daffodil;
Till winds the last June roses kill,
And Autumn fades; till, 'neath the yew,
Once more we cry, with Winter chill,
Hail to you all, Old Friends and New!

ENVOY.

Come! Unto all a horn we spill,
Brimmed with a foaming Yule-tide brew,
Hail to you all, by vale and hill!—
Hail to you all, Old Friends and New!

1881.

REGRETS.

AFTER JOACHIM DU BELLAY.

I.

ALAS ! where now doth scorn of fortune hide ?
And where the heart that still must conqueror be ;
Where the strong hope of immortality,
And that fine flame to common souls denied ?

Where is the joyance which at eventide,
Through the brown night, the silver moon could see,
With all the Nine, whenas in fancy free
I led them dance, some sacred stream beside ?

Dame Fortune now is mistress of my soul,
And this my heart, that I would fain control,
Is grown the thrall of many a fear and sigh.

For after-time no more have I desire ;
No more within I feel that ancient fire,
And the sweet Muses turn from me and fly.

1886.

REGRETS.

AFTER JOACHIM DU BELLAY.

II.

HAPPY the man, like wise Ulysses tried,
Or him of yore that gat the Fleece of Gold,
Who comes at last, from travels manifold,
Among his kith and kindred to abide!

When shall I see, from my small hamlet-side,
Once more the blue and curling smoke unrolled?
When the poor boundaries of my house behold—
Poor, but to me as any province wide?

Ah, more than these imperious piles of Rome
Laugh the low portals of my boyhood's home!
More than their marble must its slate-roof be!

More than the Tiber's flood my Loire is still!
More than the Palatine my native hill,
And the soft air of Anjou than the sea!

1886.

TO MONSIEUR DE LA MOTHE LE
VAYER, UPON THE DEATH OF
HIS SON.

AFTER MOLIÈRE.

LET thy tears flow, LE VAYER, let them flow :—
None of scant cause thy sorrowing can accuse,
Since, losing that which thou for aye dost lose,
E'en the most wise might find a ground for woe.

Vainly we strive with precepts to forego
The drops of pity that are pity's dues;
And Nature's self, indignant, doth refuse
To count for fortitude that heartless show.

No grief, alas ! can now bring back again
The son too dear, by Death untimely ta'en;
Yet, not the less, his loss is hard to bear.

Graced as he was by all the world reveres,
Large heart, keen wit, a lofty soul and rare,
—Surely these claim immitigable tears.

1886.

THE BALLAD OF BITTER FRUIT.

AFTER THÉODORE DE BANVILLE.

IN the wood with its wide arms overspread,
Where the wan morn strives with the waning night,
The dim shapes strung like a chaplet dread
Shudder, and sway to the left, the right;
The soft rays touch them with fingers white
As they swing in the leaves of the oak-tree browned,
Fruits that the Turk and the Moor would fright,—
This is King Lewis his orchard ground.

All of these poor folk, stark and sped,
Dreaming (who knows!) of what dead despight,
In the freshening breeze by the morning fed
Twirl and spin to the mad wind's might;
Over them wavers the warm sun bright;
Look on them, look on them, skies profound,
Look how they dance in the morning light!—
This is King Lewis his orchard ground.

Dead, these dead, in a language dead,
Cry to their fellows in evil plight ;
Day meanwhile thro' the lift o'erhead
Dazzles and flames at the blue vault's height ;
Into the air the dews take flight ;
Ravens and crows with a jubilant sound
Over them, over them, hover and light ;—
This is King Lewis his orchard ground.

ENVOY.

Prince, we wot of no sorrier sight
Under the whispering leafage found,
Bodies that hang like a hideous blight ;—
This is King Lewis his orchard ground.

1889.

FOR "NOTES AND QUERIES."

IN "N. and Q." we meet to weigh
The Hannibals of yesterday ;
 We trace, thro' all its moss o'ergrown,
 The script upon Time's oldest stone,
Nor scorn his latest waif and stray.

Letters and Folk-lore, Art, the Play ;
Whate'er, in short, men think or say,
 We make our theme,—we make our own,—
 In "N. and Q."

Stranger, whoe'er you be, who may
From China to Peru survey,
 Aghast, the waste of things unknown,
 Take heart of grace, you're not alone,
And all (who will) may find their way
 In "N. and Q."

TO THE PUBLISHER OF
"THE NEW MONTHLY REVIEW."

IN the first days of this Review,
When Griffith, ay, and Madam, too,
From the old Dunciad in the Row
Instructed folk how they should go,
'Tis rumoured that they kept confined
And cabined in some room behind
A queer slow-witted, stuttering rogue,
An usher, with an Irish brogue,
Who, working then for Grub-Street pay,
Yet lived to write one perfect play
That still is played ; to tell a tale
Still, as the book-stalls show, on sale ;
And write, besides, some verse of note
That still old-fashioned persons quote.

Full well I wot, Sir, your domain
No such back-parlour could contain ;

Sure, too, am I you would not choose
The Dunciad for *your* sign to use ;
But still I trust that you may light
Upon some genius who will write
Plain-spoken things, and unperplext,
That we may read this year and next, .
Though they should fail to last as long
As GOLDSMITH's play and tale and song !

1900.

R. L. S. IN MEMORIAM.

FOR THE NEW CENTURY NUMBER OF THE
EDINBURGH "STUDENT."

THESE to his Memory. May the age arriving,
As ours, recall
That bravest heart, that gay and gallant striving,
That laurelled pall!

Blithe and rare spirit! We who later linger,
By bleaker seas,
Sigh for the touch of the Magician's finger,
His golden keys.

1901.

FOR A VOLUME OF VERSE.

GOOD Sir, or Madam, pray come in,—
No doubt you'll find a vacant seat.
Our "plot," maybe, is somewhat thin,—
We hope at least the "parts" complete.

Of themes sublime we seldom treat,—
Be warned of that ere we begin.
Good Sir, or Madam, pray come in,—
No doubt you'll find a vacant seat.

Here is the BILL. You see we spin
But trifles. Still, a slight conceit
May prove the pin to prick a sin,—
The balm to make a virtue sweet.
Good Sir, or Madam, pray come in,—
No doubt you'll find a vacant seat.

1877.

“ALBI, NE DOLEAS.”

(HOR. i. 33.)

LOVE mocks us all. Then cast aside
These tuneful plaints, my Albius tried,
For heartless Glycera, from thee
Fled to a younger lover. See,—
Low-browed Lycoris burns denied

For Cyrus; he (though goats shall bide
With wolves ere she in him confide)
Turns, with base suit, to Pholoë:—
Love mocks us all!

So Venus wills, and joys to guide,
'Neath brazen yolk pairs ill-allied
In form and mind. So linked she me
(Whom worthier wooed) to Myrtale,
Fair, but less kind than Hadria's tide,—
Love mocks us all!

1887.

“POSCIMUR.”

(HOR. i. 32.)

THE Muses call. Now, shell, inspire,
If aught, to last this year and more,
Lightly, we two have wrought before,
Come now, a song like his whose fire

First smote thee, from th' Aonian choir,
Catching, through camp and tempest's roar,
The Muses' call,—

Singing the Queen of all desire,
Bacchus, and Cupid flutt'ring o'er,
And Lycus:—thou, that Phœbus bore,
Dear to Jove's feast, care-soothing Lyre!—
The Muses call.

1887.

THE PEACOCK ON THE WALL.
A MEDIÆVAL BALLAD, IN THE MODERN
MANNER.

A DOUGHTY knight was Hue le Beau,
A flower of men, perfay,
A gentle squire of dames also—
In his peculiar way.

I say “peculiar,” for in truth,
According to his view,
Men must have had eternal youth—
Or nothing else to do.

He held that but when years had past
In courtesies minute,
His love should yield herself at last
To his protracted suit.

Culture, he urged, could love extend
To lengths so undefined,
A man might quite a lifetime spend
Before he spoke his mind.

Alix le Fay was straight and tall,
A maid of high degree;
And by her father's orchard wall
He met her,—frequently.

These were the merely prologue days,
And on her lily cheek,
Sir Hue, for quite three hours, would gaze,
But not a word would speak;

Then, feeling first to ascertain
Whether the grass was wet,
This blameless knight and man was fain
Upon his knees to get;

And lifting up her fingers two,
With gentle gesture, he
Would lay his bearded lip thereto
And kiss,—respectfully.

Seven years Sir Hue had gazed and kissed
In this enlightened wise,
And only on Saints' days had missed
His usual exercise.

Seven years Sir Hue had kissed and gazed,
And in no detail swerved,
Till he, one afternoon,—amazed,
Perceived he was observed.

For lo, upon the orchard wall,
A Peacock-bird would rest,
That seemed to watch his motions all
With wonder manifest.

“Sir Knight,”—(at once began the bird)
“Though I appear abrupt,
Believe me that it ne'er occurred
To me to interrupt.

“Fair is the path of virtue traced
By men of low estate,
Much more, ennobled by the taste
And fancy of the great.

“ A courtship, so refined, sedate
And singular in kind,
Could hardly fail to captivate
The well-conducted mind.

“ Good hap, the highest and the least
Can admiration stir,
And make of either bird or beast,
A Hero-worshipper ;

“ So I,—a bird—can yet revere
The Beautiful—the True ;—
Permit me then, I pray, Messire,
To join your party too,

“ For you, I feel, will understand
That but to contemplate
A suit so delicately planned,
Must surely elevate.”

The Knight could not refuse request
So gracefully preferred :
Thence, as the long amour progressed,
The blandly curious bird

Watched from the wall the varied shades
Of "Sweetness" and of "Light,"
As good Sir Hue went through the grades
Of Passion grown polite.

But, long ere Alix made him hers,
Departing from its post,
The Peacock, being full of years,
Had yielded up the ghost;

And after, when Sir Hue the maid
By slow degrees had gained,
He had the circumstance portrayed
Upon a window stained,

Showing himself, Alix le Fay,
The Peacock watching by;
"And there it stands unto this day
To witness if I lie."

1873.



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